

Message Text

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12

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 EUR-25 L-03 H-03 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

SPC-03 DRC-01 /091 W

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R 152251Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2488

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1508

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPRS, PINT, GT

SUBJECT: GOG TO EXPEL 11 FOREIGN PRIESTS (3 AMERICANS INVOLVED)

REF: A. GUATEMALA 1260, B. A-031

1. THE GOG HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAS CANCELLED THE RESIDENCE PERMITS OF SEVERAL CATHOLIC PRIESTS ACCUSED OF "MEDDLING IN POLITICS." IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR CARLOS LEMUS INFORMED US MARCH 15 THAT THREE AMERICANS WILL BE EXPELLED: JOSEPH WILLIAM TOWLE, WILLIAM JOSEPH PRICE AND THOMAS FOX, ALL MARYKNOLLERS STATIONED IN HUEHUETENANGO. LEMUS EXPECTED THEY WOULD DEPART DURING THE MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK. THE IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR ASKED THAT THE EMBASSY NOT MAKE PUBLIC THE PRIESTS' NAMES. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT EIGHT OTHER PRIESTS ARE INVOLVED, INCLUDING GERMANS, SPANIARDS AND CANADIANS WHO ALSO HAVE SERVED IN INDIAN VILLAGES IN THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS.

2. THE GUATEMALAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE PROTESTED THE GOG DECISION MARCH 12 IN A CABLE TO PRESIDENT ARANA. THE BISHOPS NOTED THAT THE PRIESTS ORDERED TO DEPART WERE THE SAME AS THOSE WHO THE GOG HAD CONFINED TO THE CAPITAL DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD (REF A). THE BISHOPS ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO EXPEL THE PRIESTS WAS BASED
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UPON "UNJUST ACCUSATIONS OF PARTISAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION."

THE GOG HAS MADE PUBLIC PRESIDENT ARANA'S REPLY TO THE BISHOPS,
IN WHICH HE STATED THAT, "IT WOULD NOT APPEAR STRANGE" THAT
THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CANCEL THE RESIDENCE PERMITS OF
"ANY FOREIGNERS WHO MEDDLE IN POLITICS, ESPECIALLY IN THE
CASE OF PRIESTS."
MELOY

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Message Attributes

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